

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-22 are currently pending. No claims have been amended herewith.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,168,444 to Cukor et al. (hereinafter “the ‘444 patent”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,910,896 to Hahn-Carlson (hereinafter “the ‘896 patent”).

Claim 1 is directed to a physical distribution management method, comprising: (1) an image data generation step for generating image data of a document on which a condition for exporting or importing goods is described; (2) an image data storage step for storing the image data generated in the image data generation step to be association with the goods; (3) a document data storage step for storing document data described on the document, the document data to be associated with the goods; (4) an identification data storage step for storing identification data that identifies a party concerned with export or import of the goods among, in addition to a consignor and a consignee, a number of parties concerned with export or import of the goods; and (5) a data output step, when the party concerned specifies data relating to goods, for obtaining stored data of goods to be associated with the corresponding specified data in the stored document data, and for outputting the obtained data. Further, Claim 1 recites that the identification data storage step decides a range of an output enable data to the party concerned based on stored identification data, and the data output step obtains data matching said decided range.

The '444 patent is directed to a system for image processing of documents generated in shipping transactions, the system including remote scanning stations 10 and an image file server 13. The '444 patent discloses that the document images can be captured by scanners at

a plurality of remote stations, while the images of the shipping documents can be viewed at a plurality of image processing stations 18. Thus, the system allows for the printing of transaction invoices from the image data in a database along with a hard copy of any shipping document images that are to accompany the invoices. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the '444 patent fails to disclose the identification data storage step for storing identification data that identifies a party concerned with export or import of the goods among a number of parties concerned with export or import of the goods, wherein the identification data storage step decides a range of output enable data to the party concerned based on stored identification data, as recited in Claim 1. Moreover, Applicant respectfully submit that the '444 patent fails to disclose the data output step for obtaining stored data of goods to be associated with the corresponding specified data in the stored document data, wherein the data outputs step obtains data matching the decided range decided in the identification data storage step. Rather, the '444 patent merely discloses that a workstation employs a microcomputer with a monitor for viewing images of scanned documents and that the images are sent to the workstation by the image file server. However, the '444 patent does not disclose that a party concerned specifies data relating to goods and the step of obtaining output data matching the range decided in the identification data storage step.

The '896 patent is directed to a computer processing system for tracking a shipment transaction involving a shipper and a carrier. As shown in Figure 1, the '896 patent discloses a central processor 40 that receives transaction information from a data processing device 34 associated with the shipper 20. The transaction information, which is listed in Table 1 of the '896 patent, is maintained by the central processor 40, which allows access to the information by the shipper 20 and the carrier 22. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the '896 patent fails to disclose an identification data storage step that decides the range of an output enable data to the party concerned based on stored identification data that identifies a party

concerned with import or export, as recited in Claim 1. In addition, Applicants respectfully submit that the '896 patent fails to disclose the claimed data output step for obtaining stored data of goods to be associated with the corresponding specified data in the stored document data. In this regard, Applicants note that the Office Action states that the '896 patent discloses an "authorized user profile list," which reads on the claimed range of output enable data to the party concerned. However, the '896 patent merely discloses that the authorized user list is used to authenticate transaction information by comparing elements of the transaction with the authorized user list to assign a payment ID, which is used to track the transaction. Thus, Applicants submit that the '896 patent fails to disclose deciding a range of output enable data for a party concerned based on stored identification data, and obtaining and outputting data matching the decided range.

Thus, no matter how the teachings of the '444 and '896 patents are combined, the combination does not teach or suggest the identification data storage step and the data output step recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established and the rejection of Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-9) should be withdrawn.

Independent Claims 10 and 19-22 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above for the patentability of Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established and the rejections of Claims 10 (and dependent Claims 11-18) and 19-22 should be withdrawn.

Regarding Claim 3, Applicants respectfully submit that, no matter how the teachings of the '444 and '896 patents are combined, the combination does not teach or suggest displaying a diagram illustrating a correspondence between a person who conducts a

specified procedure and a person who receives the procedure. Column 12 of the '896 patent cited by the Office Action is unrelated to displaying a diagram.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1, 10, and 19-22 (and all associated dependent claims) patentably define over any proper combination of the '444 and '896 patents.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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